



LEROY D. BACA, SHERIFF

County of Los Angeles
Sheriff's Department Headquarters
4700 Ramona Boulevard
Monterey Park, California 91754-2169



May 12, 2006

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

SEPARATE SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT DIVISION FOR SWORN PERSONNEL

This correspondence is in response to your Board's February 21, 2006, request for a report on whether or not the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (Department) recommends creating a separate division for sworn personnel.

The Department's 20th *Semiannual Report*, released in August 2005, by Special Counsel Merrick J. Bobb and staff, recommended that it "...consider the feasibility of having two separate tracks for deputies: one for custody operations and another for patrol." Due to the severe deputy sheriff shortage the Department was facing at the time, we gave serious consideration to the merits of instituting a dual classification system, which included a review of two law enforcement agencies with such an operation.

We visited the San Diego Sheriff's Department, which was specifically referenced in the Special Counsel's Report, and also contacted the Santa Clara Sheriff's Department for information on that County's separate Department of Corrections. Our Department focused on determining whether there was a significant reduction in the number of vacancies, through a bifurcated hiring process for separate classifications of custody and patrol deputies, or reduced operational costs by having correctional staff working assignments that were traditionally handled by fully sworn deputy sheriffs.

A Tradition of Service

After carefully reviewing the pros and cons of a dual classification system, we have determined that it is not a feasible option for our Department, at this time, for the following reasons:

- There would be little or no cost savings. Parity is a major concern of correctional staff, with a strong interest in their obtaining peace officer status, salaries, and benefits equal to the patrol side. For example, the Santa Clara County Department of Correction's officer salaries were increased to only a three (3) percent differential between theirs and the Santa Clara Sheriff's Department's salaries, and both departments have "3 percent at 50" retirement benefit packages. Additionally, the need for separate management hierarchies within the two departments further increases the custody operational costs. Alarming, the San Diego Sheriff's Department characterized their overall cost savings as neutral.
- The recruitment challenges our Department is experiencing would not necessarily be alleviated by hiring separate categories of correctional officers for the County Jail. Due to higher pay and greater opportunity for advancement or specialized assignments, many correctional officers would likely seek a career in patrol, which causes vacancies on the custody side, thus limiting the more stable pool of jail personnel the dual classification system was initially intended to accomplish.
- Establishing a separate career path and category for custody personnel would limit the Department's ability to respond to critical field incidents necessitating extensive Department-wide manpower deployments.

Our review revealed that, while in concept, a dual classification system appeared to show promise, the reality is that it is not the panacea many perceive it to be, and our Department is best served by maintaining the present division staffing configurations.

Should you have any questions, please contact Assistant Sheriff Paul K. Tanaka at (323) 526-5065, Chief Sammy L. Jones, Custody Operations Division, at (213) 893-5001.

Sincerely,



LEROY D. BACA
SHERIFF